SUICIDE SQUAD™

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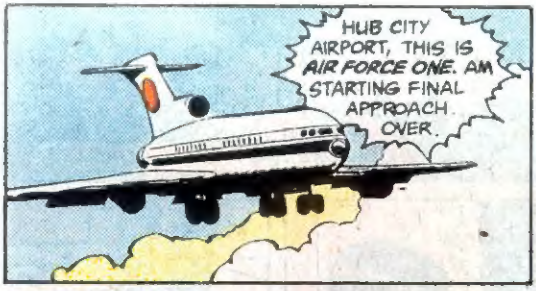
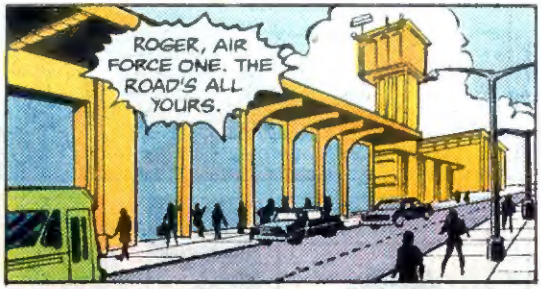
BY JOHN OSTRANDER, LUKE McDONNELL & KARL KESEL

FIRST ISSUE!





TRIAL BY BLOOD

AMERAIR FLIGHT 206 TO GOTHAM CITY NOW BOARDING AT GATE L5.

AIR DIXIE PAGING MR. GAUNT. MR. JOHN GAUNT. WOULD YOU PLEASE PICK UP THE NEAREST AIR DIXIE COURTESY PHONE.

ATTENTION, PLEASE. ALPHA FLIGHT 123 FROM CALGARY TO HUB CITY HAS BEEN DELAYED...

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ANOTHER FINE HACSA/GRUNDY SCAN

JOHN OSTRANDER, WRITER
LUKE McDONNELL, PENCILLER

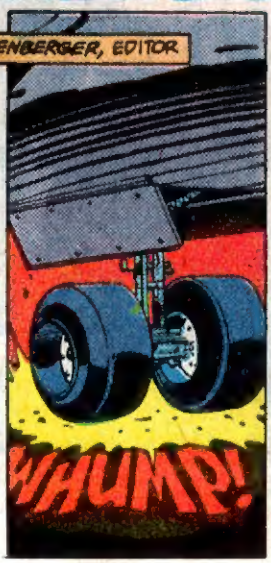
KARL KESEL, INKER

TODD KLEIN, LETTERER

CARL GAFFORD, COLORIST

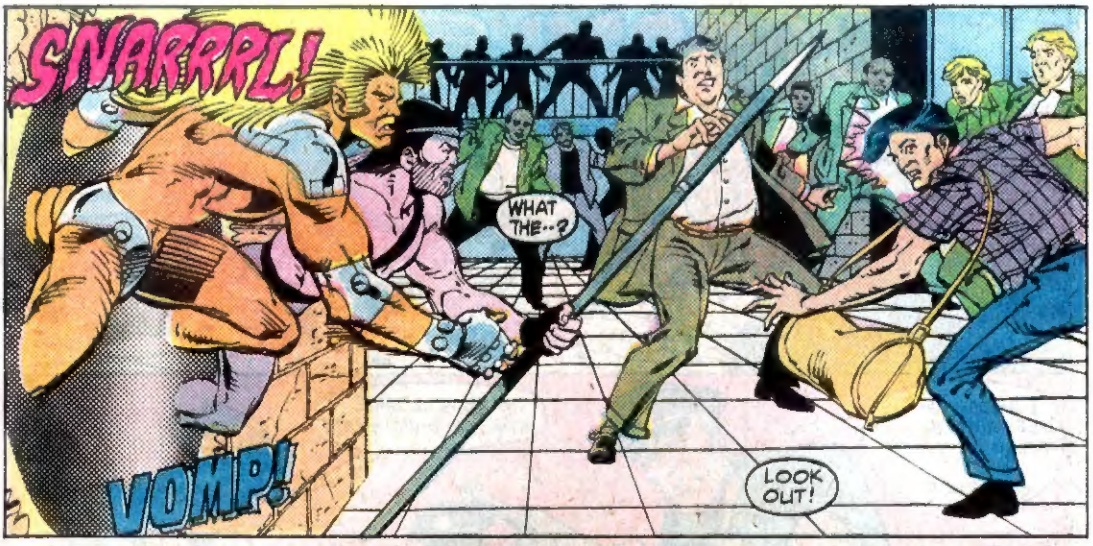
PROTOCOL SUGGESTS THE GOVERNOR GREET THE PRESIDENT FIRST, MR. MAYOR.
NOT WHEN IT WAS THE MAYOR WHO GOT THE GOVERNOR HIS JOB, GOVERNOR.

ROBERT GREENBERGER, EDITOR


WHUMP!

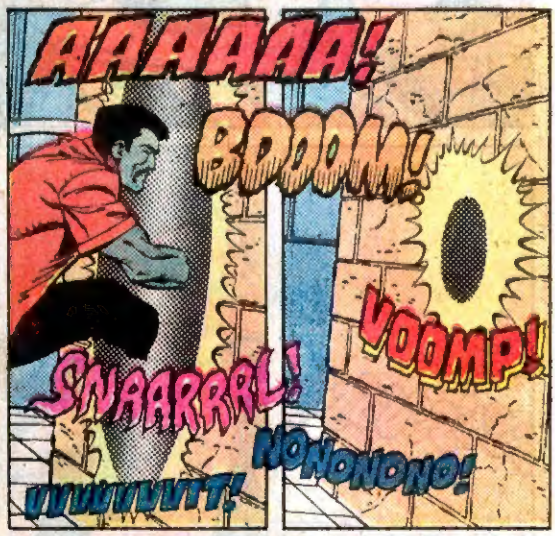
NOW.

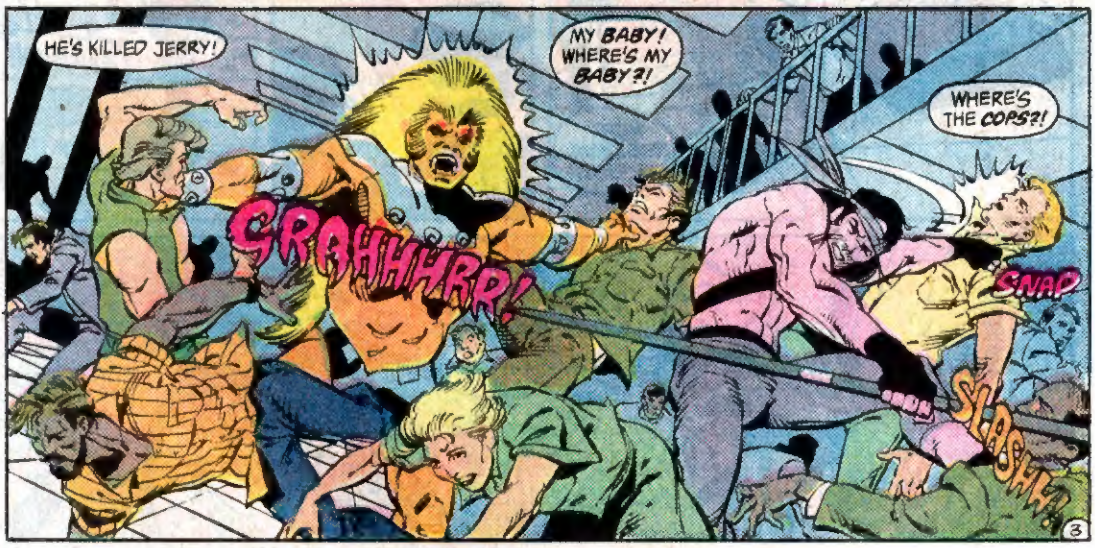
TZEE TZEE TZEE
2

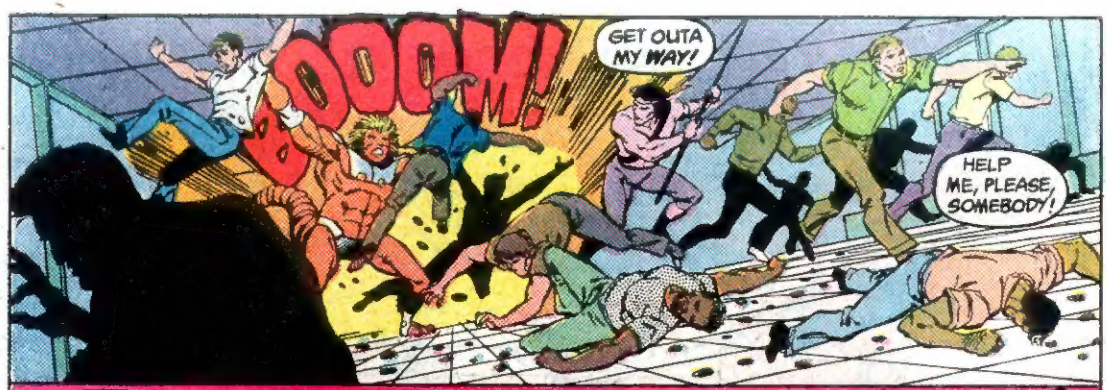

SNARRRL!
WHAT THE..?
VOMP!
LOOK OUT!

CLEAR!

WHAT ARE THOSE... OHMYHEAVENS, IT JUST KILLED...!
GRAHHRR!
VIT!
VIT!


AAAAAA!
BDOOM!
SNARRRL!
VOOMP!
NONONONO!
VVVVVVVIT!


HE'S KILLED JERRY!
MY BABY! WHERE'S MY BABY?!
WHERE'S THE COPS?!
GRAHHHRR!
SNAP
SLASH!

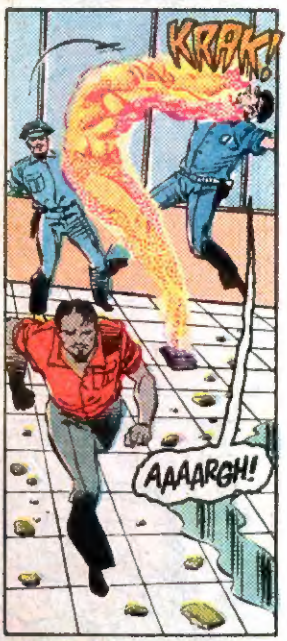

BOOOM!
GET OUTA MY WAY!
HELP ME, PLEASE, SOMEBODY!

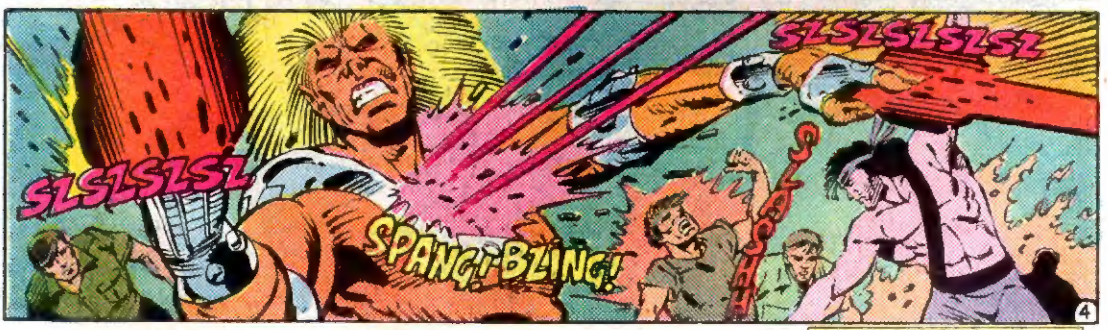
I THOUGHT WE WERE SUPPOSED TO WATCH THE MAYOR AND THE GOVERNOR?
THE FEDS'LL TAKE CARE OF THEM! MOVE!

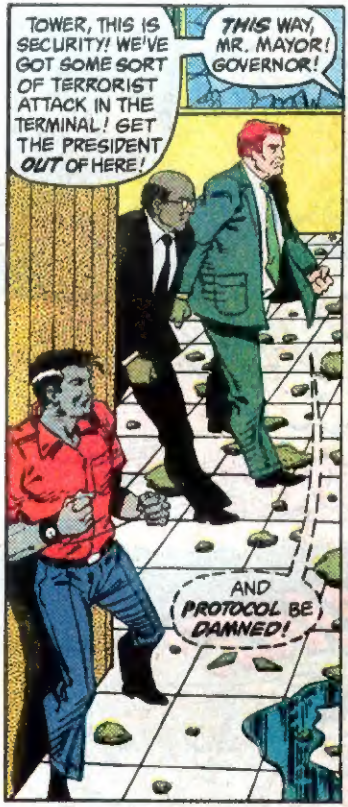
SSSSSSSSSS

WHAT THE DEVIL IS THAT?!

NOT DEVIL. DJINN.

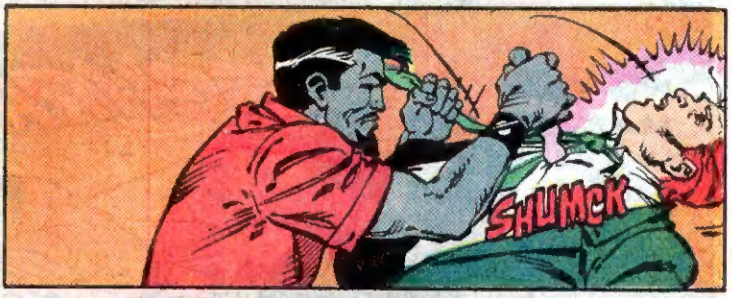

KRAK!
AAAARGH!


SLSLSLSLSL
SLSLSLSLSL
SPANG! BLING!
SLASHH


TOWER, THIS IS SECURITY! WE'VE GOT SOME SORT OF TERRORIST ATTACK IN THE TERMINAL! GET THE PRESIDENT OUT OF HERE!
THIS WAY, MR. MAYOR! GOVERNOR!
AND PROTOCOL BE DAMNED!

VIP
GURK!
SORRY, DIDN'T CATCH THAT.

UK!... WAIT!... I'M NOT...!


SHUMCK

ALL RIGHT! FREEZE!

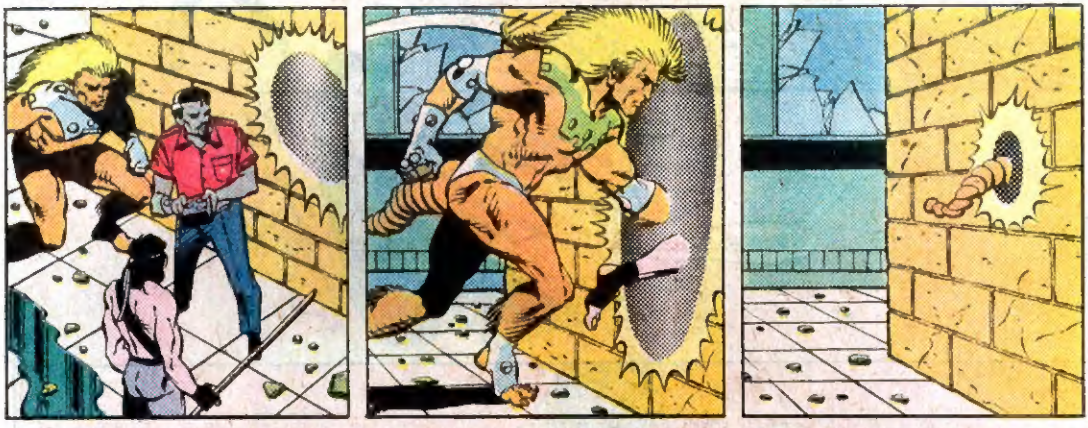
BDOOM!

3,000 YEARS MORE, O KALI.

AIR FORCE ONE, THIS IS THE TOWER! AIRPORT'S UNDER ATTACK! REPEAT: UNDER ATTACK! GET AIRBORNE!
ROGER, TOWER. WE COPY. INCREASING POWER. INITIATING EMERGENCY PROCEDURES.
WEEIIIINNN!

WHUMP!
SHWOOOO
KKKK
TEEE
VOMP!
FWOOMP!
SCHRANG!
SCHRAKKK!

BWOMP!
SCREEEEEEEEECH!
RECALL.
STANDBY.
GO.
VOOMP!
MAYDAY! MAYDAY! THIS IS AIR FORCE ONE! LOST LANDING GEAR, LOST WING!
BUH-DOOOM!
7



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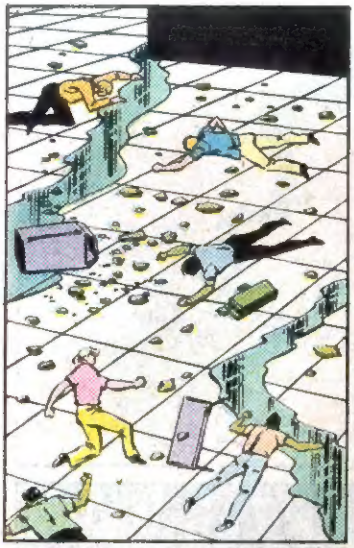
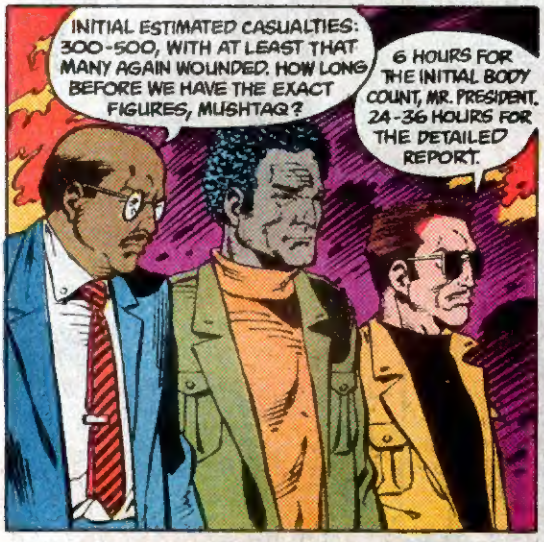
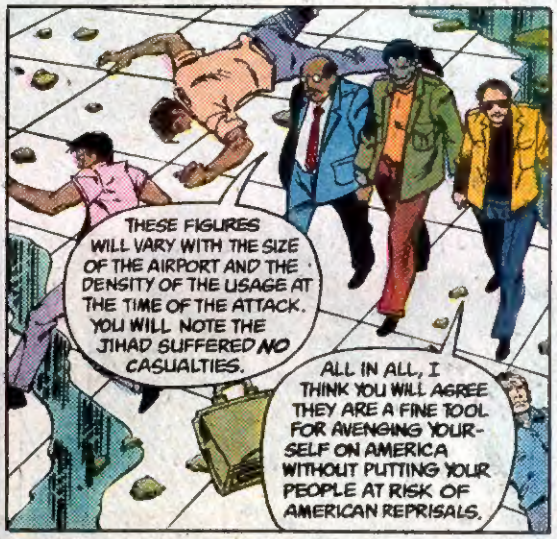
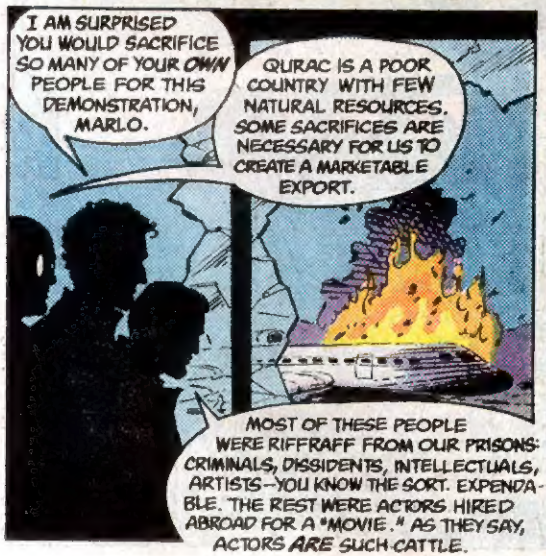
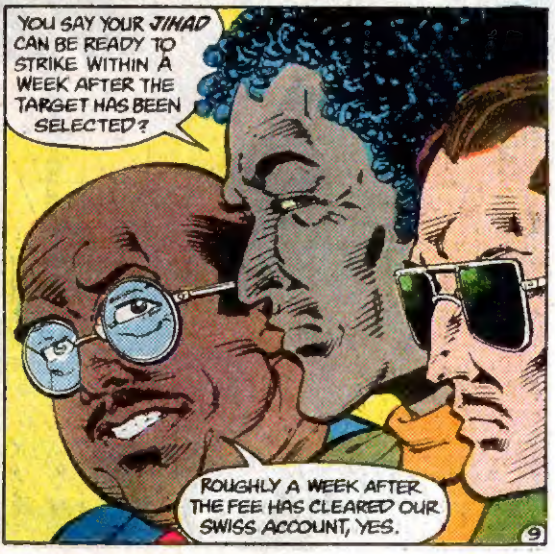


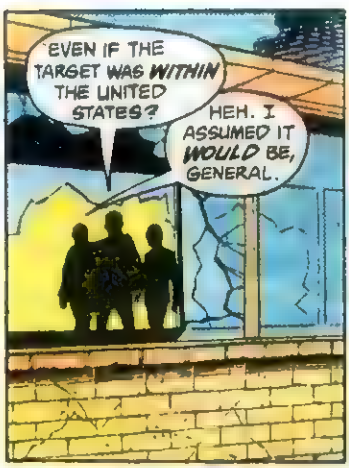
TIME OF ATTACK, FROM INITIATION TO FINAL WITHDRAWAL: ONE MINUTE, SEVEN SECONDS, GENERAL.

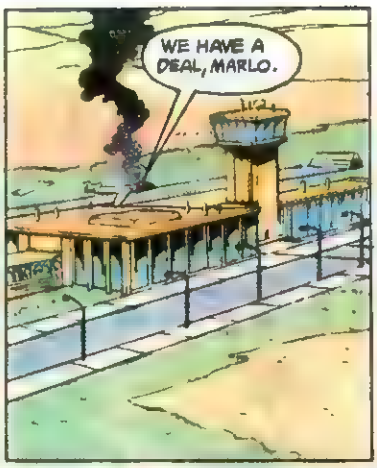

INITIAL ESTIMATED CASUALTIES: 300-500, WITH AT LEAST THAT MANY AGAIN WOUNDED. HOW LONG BEFORE WE HAVE THE EXACT FIGURES, MUSHTAQ?
6 HOURS FOR THE INITIAL BODY COUNT, MR. PRESIDENT. 24-36 HOURS FOR THE DETAILED REPORT.

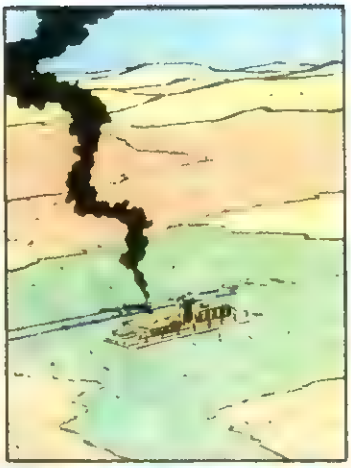

THESE FIGURES WILL VARY WITH THE SIZE OF THE AIRPORT AND THE DENSITY OF THE USAGE AT THE TIME OF THE ATTACK. YOU WILL NOTE THE JIHAD SUFFERED NO CASUALTIES.
ALL IN ALL, I THINK YOU WILL AGREE THEY ARE A FINE TOOL FOR AVENGING YOURSELF ON AMERICA WITHOUT PUTTING YOUR PEOPLE AT RISK OF AMERICAN REPRISALS.


I AM SURPRISED YOU WOULD SACRIFICE SO MANY OF YOUR OWN PEOPLE FOR THIS DEMONSTRATION, MARLO.
QURAC IS A POOR COUNTRY WITH FEW NATURAL RESOURCES. SOME SACRIFICES ARE NECESSARY FOR US TO CREATE A MARKETABLE EXPORT.
MOST OF THESE PEOPLE WERE RIFFRAFF FROM OUR PRISONS: CRIMINALS, DISSIDENTS, INTELLECTUALS, ARTISTS—YOU KNOW THE SORT. EXPENDABLE. THE REST WERE ACTORS HIRED ABROAD FOR A "MOVIE." AS THEY SAY, ACTORS ARE SUCH CATTLE.


YOU SAY YOUR JIHAD CAN BE READY TO STRIKE WITHIN A WEEK AFTER THE TARGET HAS BEEN SELECTED?
ROUGHLY A WEEK AFTER THE FEE HAS CLEARED OUR SWISS ACCOUNT, YES.





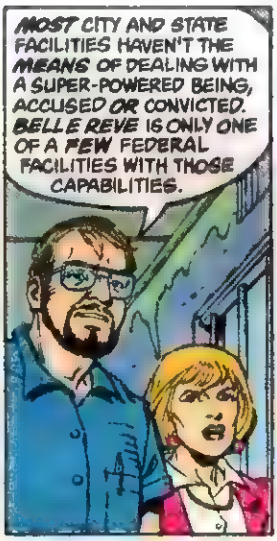


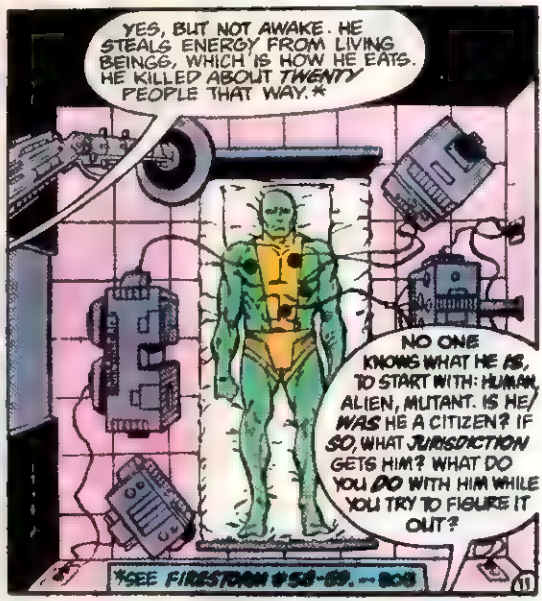
BELLE REVE FEDERAL PRISON, LOUISIANA.

YOU WERE SAYING THE PRISON WAS BUILT ON THE SITE OF AN OLD SOUTHERN PLANTATION, MR. ECONOMOS. THIS PLANTATION WAS BUILT IN THE *SWAMP*, WARDEN?

NEAR ONE THAT SEEMS TO HAVE *GROWN* OVER THE LAST CENTURY, MISS VALE. AND I REALLY THINK THAT AFTER ALL THE TIME WE'VE SPENT TOGETHER OVER THE PAST FEW DAYS, PUTTING THIS STORY TOGETHER FOR YOUR MAGAZINE, THAT YOU COULD CALL ME "JOHN", VICKI.

I PREFER TO KEEP THE PROFESSIONAL DISTANCE, WARDEN. NOTHING PERSONAL. YOU SAID BELLE REVE WAS DESIGNED NOT ONLY TO INCARCERATE *CONVICTED* SUPER-POWERED FELONS BUT TO ALSO ACT AS A *HOLDING FACILITY*?

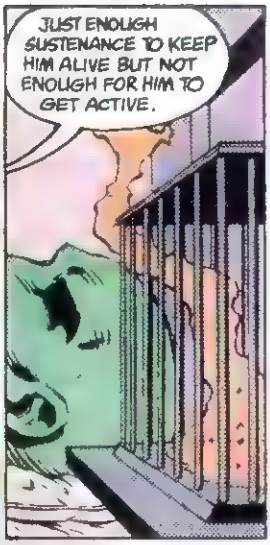




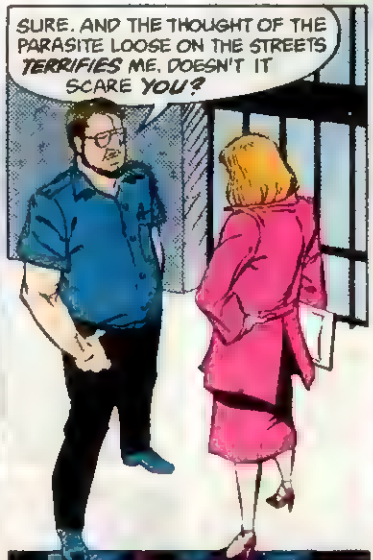
HE'S ATTENDED ENTIRELY BY MACHINES. ABSOLUTELY NO HUMANS ARE ALLOWED IN THE CELL WITH HIM. EVERY FEW HOURS, WE SHOVE IN A RAT.

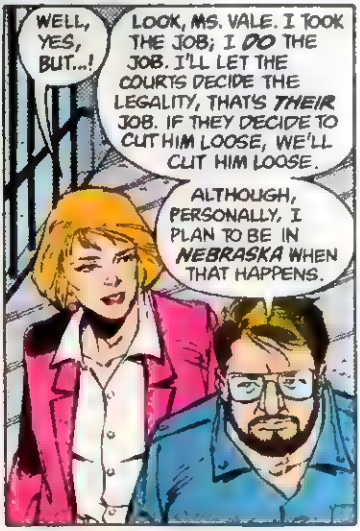
WATCH WHAT HAPPENS.

SSSSSSSCK!

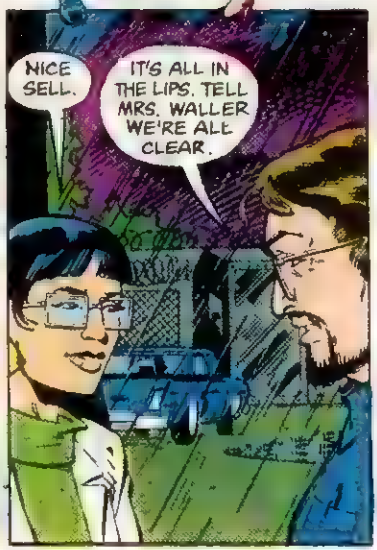

JUST ENOUGH SUSTENANCE TO KEEP HIM ALIVE BUT NOT ENOUGH FOR HIM TO GET ACTIVE.

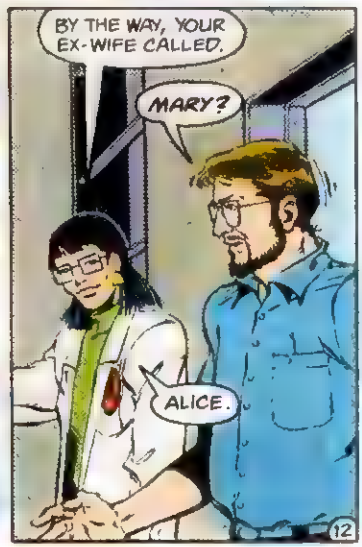
IT'S BARBARIC! ISN'T THE ACLU TRYING TO DO SOMETHING ABOUT IT?
SURE. SO'S THE ASPCA.
DOESN'T IT BOTHER YOU?

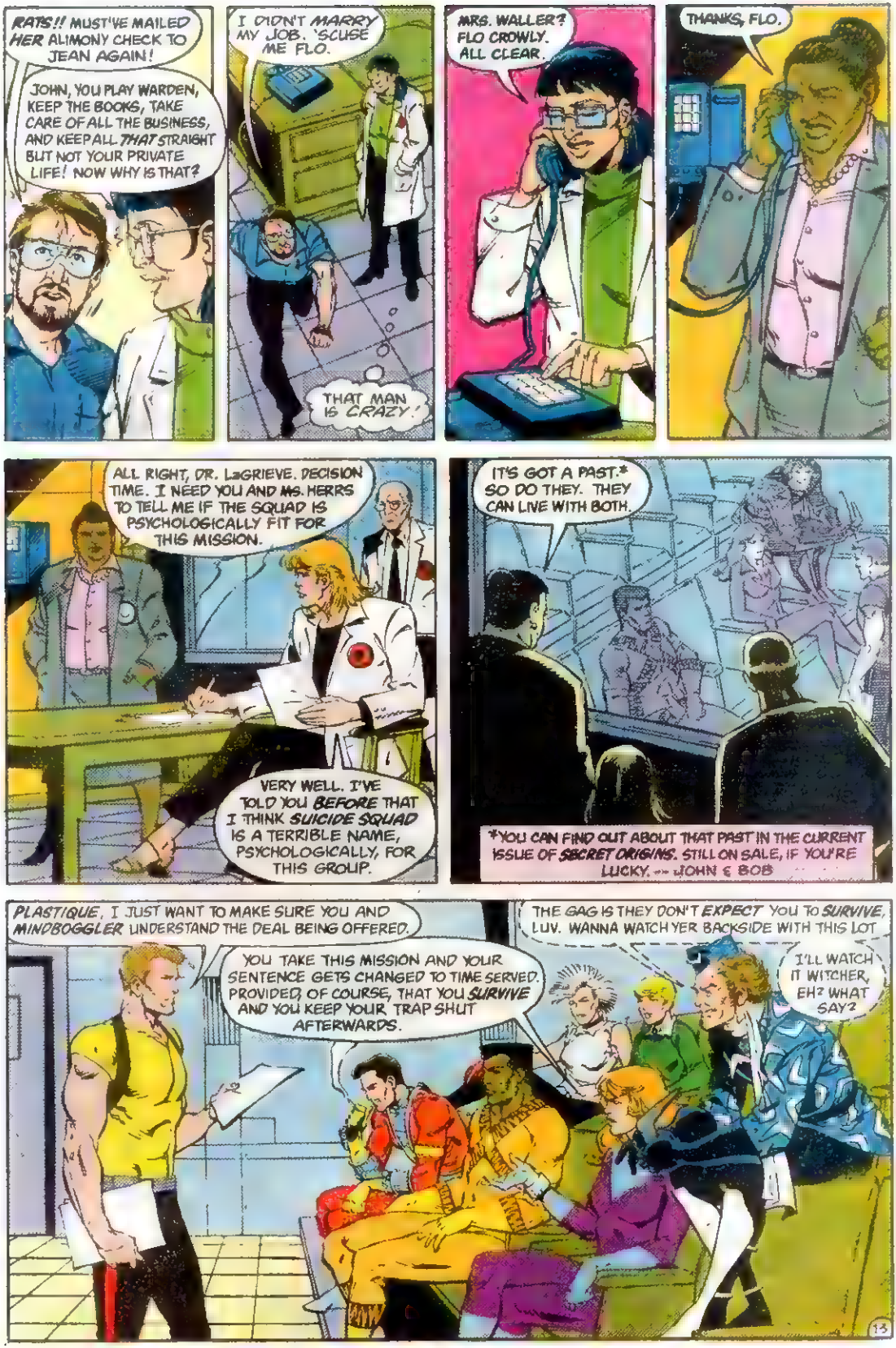

SURE. AND THE THOUGHT OF THE PARASITE LOOSE ON THE STREETS TERRIFIES ME. DOESN'T IT SCARE YOU?

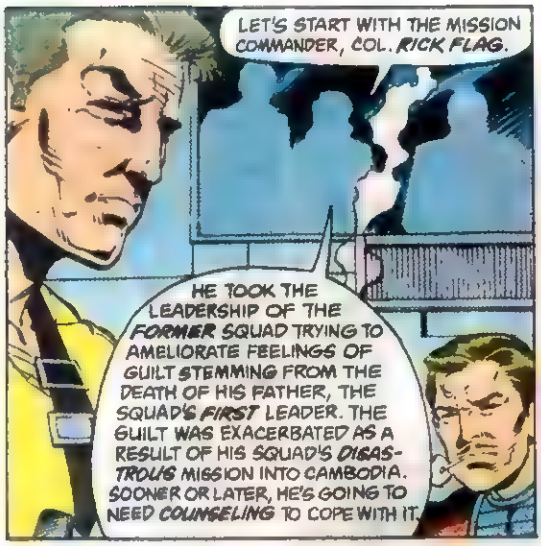

WELL, YES, BUT...!
LOOK, MS. VALE. I TOOK THE JOB; I DO THE JOB. I'LL LET THE COURTS DECIDE THE LEGALITY, THAT'S THEIR JOB. IF THEY DECIDE TO CUT HIM LOOSE, WE'LL CUT HIM LOOSE.
ALTHOUGH, PERSONALLY, I PLAN TO BE IN NEBRASKA WHEN THAT HAPPENS.

ENJOYED HAVING YOU, MS. VALE. LOOKING FORWARD TO THE ARTICLE.
HOPE YOU SAY THAT AFTER YOU READ IT, MR. ECONOMOS!


NICE SELL.
IT'S ALL IN THE LIPS. TELL MRS. WALLER WE'RE ALL CLEAR.


BY THE WAY, YOUR EX-WIFE CALLED.
MARY?
ALICE.


RATS!! MUST'VE MAILED HER ALIMONY CHECK TO JEAN AGAIN!
JOHN, YOU PLAY WARDEN, KEEP THE BOOKS, TAKE CARE OF ALL THE BUSINESS, AND KEEP ALL THAT STRAIGHT BUT NOT YOUR PRIVATE LIFE! NOW WHY IS THAT?
I DIDN'T MARRY MY JOB. 'SCUSE ME FLO.
THAT MAN IS CRAZY!
MRS. WALLER? FLO CROWLY. ALL CLEAR.
THANKS, FLO.
ALL RIGHT, DR. LaGRIEVE. DECISION TIME. I NEED YOU AND MS. HERRS TO TELL ME IF THE SQUAD IS PSYCHOLOGICALLY FIT FOR THIS MISSION.
VERY WELL. I'VE TOLD YOU BEFORE THAT I THINK SUICIDE SQUAD IS A TERRIBLE NAME, PSYCHOLOGICALLY, FOR THIS GROUP.
IT'S GOT A PAST.* SO DO THEY. THEY CAN LIVE WITH BOTH.
*YOU CAN FIND OUT ABOUT THAT PAST IN THE CURRENT ISSUE OF SECRET ORIGINS. STILL ON SALE, IF YOU'RE LUCKY. -- JOHN & BOB
PLASTIQUE, I JUST WANT TO MAKE SURE YOU AND MINDBOGGLER UNDERSTAND THE DEAL BEING OFFERED.
YOU TAKE THIS MISSION AND YOUR SENTENCE GETS CHANGED TO TIME SERVED. PROVIDED, OF COURSE, THAT YOU SURVIVE AND YOU KEEP YOUR TRAP SHUT AFTERWARDS.
THE GAG IS THEY DON'T EXPECT YOU TO SURVIVE, LUV. WANNA WATCH YER BACKSIDE WITH THIS LOT.
I'LL WATCH IT WITCHER, EH? WHAT SAY?


LET'S START WITH THE MISSION COMMANDER, COL. RICK FLAG.
HE TOOK THE LEADERSHIP OF THE FORMER SQUAD TRYING TO AMELIORATE FEELINGS OF GUILT STEMMING FROM THE DEATH OF HIS FATHER, THE SQUAD'S FIRST LEADER. THE GUILT WAS EXACERBATED AS A RESULT OF HIS SQUAD'S DISASTROUS MISSION INTO CAMBODIA. SOONER OR LATER, HE'S GOING TO NEED COUNSELING TO COPE WITH IT.

THEN MAKE IT LATER. RIGHT NOW, WE NEED HIM AND HE'S OPERATIONAL. NEXT?

"FLOYD LAWTON, A K A DEADSHOT. MARNIE'S THE ONE WHO'S BEEN WORKING MOST CLOSELY WITH HIM."

FLOYD...MR LAWTON'S HISTORY SUGGESTS A STRONG SELF-DESTRUCTIVE URGE. HE MAY BE LOOKING FOR A WAY TO DIE AND THINKS THE SUICIDE SQUAD WILL PROVIDE ONE.
YET, THERE'S ANOTHER SIDE TO HIM, I THINK, THAT WANTS TO BE WELL, AND DOESN'T KNOW HOW!

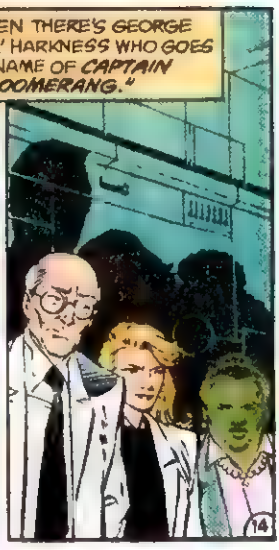
BE CAREFUL, MARNIE. STAY OBJECTIVE. BECOME TOO INVOLVED WITH THE SUBJECT AND YOU'LL LOSE YOUR ABILITY TO HELP HIM.
YES, DOCTOR.

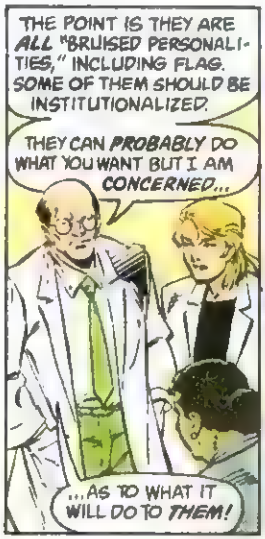
"AND THEN THERE'S THE SECOND IN COMMAND, BENJAMIN TURNER, A.K.A. THE BRONZE TIGER. YOU KNOW HIS STORY."

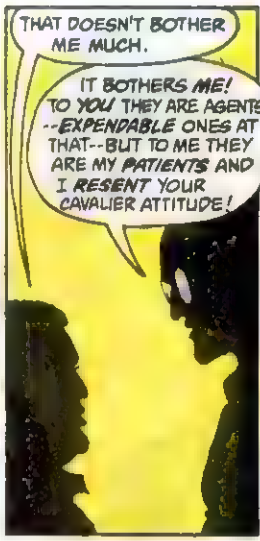
YEAH. BRAINWASHED INTO SERVING THE LEAGUE OF ASSASSINS. PARTIAL AMNESIAC, TRYING TO FILL IN THE GAPS, WHICH WE PROMISED TO HELP HIM DO.
BUT HOW DEEP DID SOME OF THE LEAGUE CONDITIONING GO? IS THERE SOMETHING THERE WAITING TO BE CALLED? HE HIMSELF WONDERS THAT.

"AND LITTLE MISS JUNE MOONE, WHO SOMETIMES IS THE ENCHANTRESS. WE RECRUITED HER BY TELLING HER WE'D FIND A WAY TO KEEP HER EVIL SELF IN CHECK. CAN WE, SIMON?"

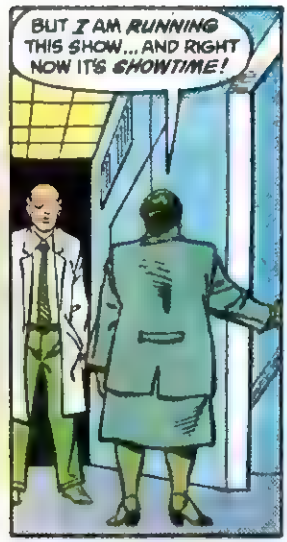
WHO KNOWS? YOU NEED A PARAPSYCHOLOGIST FOR THAT. NOT ME. MY DIAGNOSIS WAS AND IS SCHIZOPHRENIA. JUST FOR THE RECORD

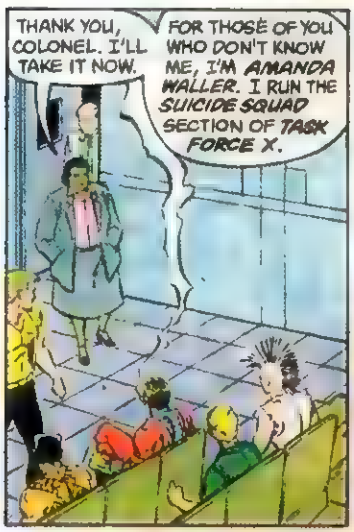

"AND THEN THERE'S GEORGE 'DIGGER' HARKNESS WHO GOES BY THE NAME OF CAPTAIN BOOMERANG."

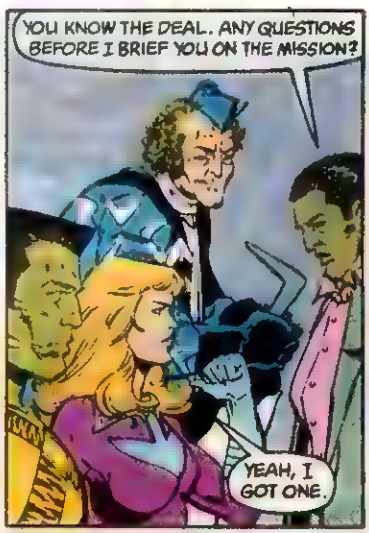

THE POINT IS THEY ARE ALL "BRUISED PERSONALITIES," INCLUDING FLAG. SOME OF THEM SHOULD BE INSTITUTIONALIZED.
THEY CAN PROBABLY DO WHAT YOU WANT BUT I AM CONCERNED...
...AS TO WHAT IT WILL DO TO THEM!

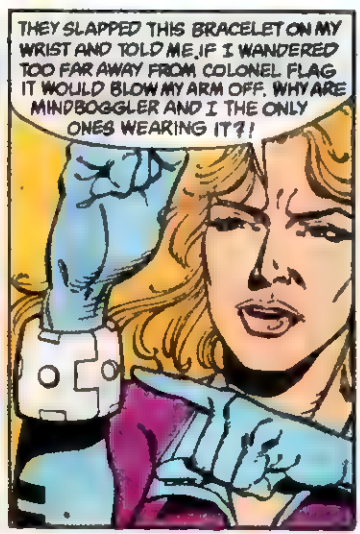

THAT DOESN'T BOTHER ME MUCH.
IT BOTHERS ME! TO YOU THEY ARE AGENTS --EXPENDABLE ONES AT THAT--BUT TO ME THEY ARE MY PATIENTS AND I RESENT YOUR CAVALIER ATTITUDE!

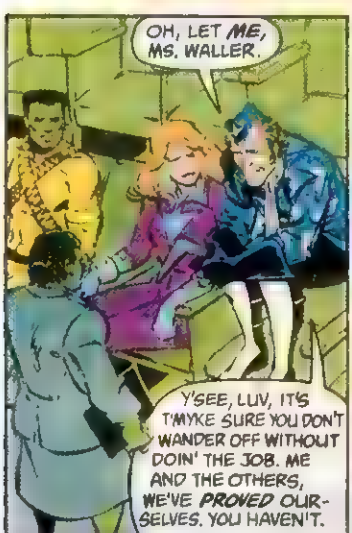
I KNOW, SIMON. THAT'S WHY I HIRED YOU. AND I RESPECT YOUR VIEWPOINT.

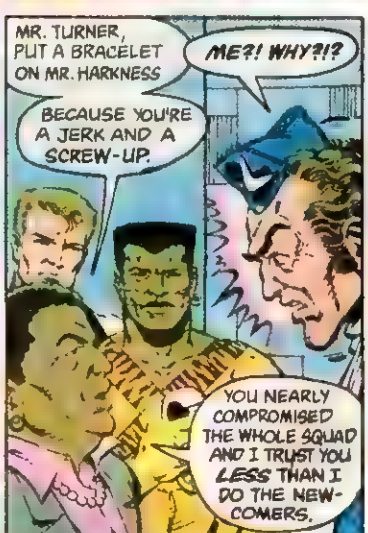

BUT I AM RUNNING THIS SHOW... AND RIGHT NOW IT'S SHOWTIME!


THANK YOU, COLONEL. I'LL TAKE IT NOW.
FOR THOSE OF YOU WHO DON'T KNOW ME, I'M AMANDA WALLER. I RUN THE SUICIDE SQUAD SECTION OF TASK FORCE X.


YOU KNOW THE DEAL. ANY QUESTIONS BEFORE I BRIEF YOU ON THE MISSION?
YEAH, I GOT ONE.


THEY SLAPPED THIS BRACELET ON MY WRIST AND TOLD ME, IF I WANDERED TOO FAR AWAY FROM COLONEL FLAG IT WOULD BLOW MY ARM OFF. WHY ARE MINDBOGGLER AND I THE ONLY ONES WEARING IT?!

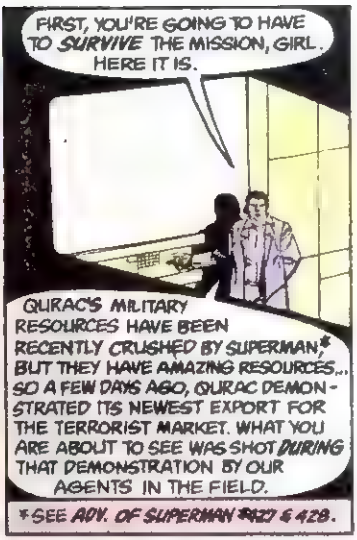

OH, LET ME, MS. WALLER.
Y'SEE, LUV, IT'S T'MYKE SURE YOU DON'T WANDER OFF WITHOUT DOIN' THE JOB. ME AND THE OTHERS, WE'VE PROVED OURSELVES. YOU HAVEN'T.


MR. TURNER, PUT A BRACELET ON MR. HARKNESS
ME?! WHY?!?
BECAUSE YOU'RE A JERK AND A SCREW-UP.
YOU NEARLY COMPROMISED THE WHOLE SQUAD AND I TRUST YOU LESS THAN I DO THE NEWCOMERS.

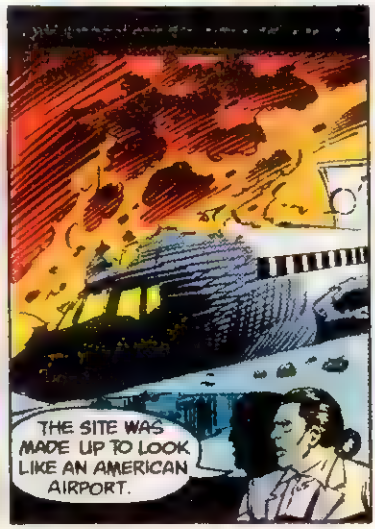
TOLD YOU BEFORE, BOOMERANG. GOT TO LEARN TO PUT YOUR MOTORMOUTH IN NEUTRAL.
CLUK

ENCHANTRESS AND DEADSHOT HAVE OPTED TO STAY WITH THE TEAM FOR THEIR OWN REASONS. AFTER WE SEE HOW THINGS GO ON THE MISSION, MINDBOGGLER, YOU AND PLASTIQUE MAY BE GIVEN THE SAME OPTION. IF YOU WANT IT.

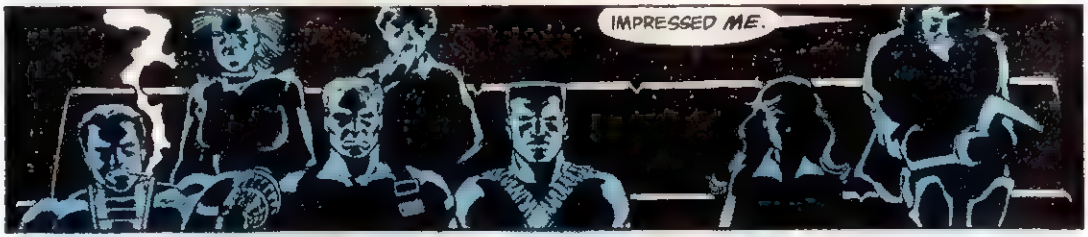
YEAH, WELL, MAYBE. I HAVEN'T FOUND ANY OTHER PLACE I FIT; LET'S SEE HOW IT GOES.

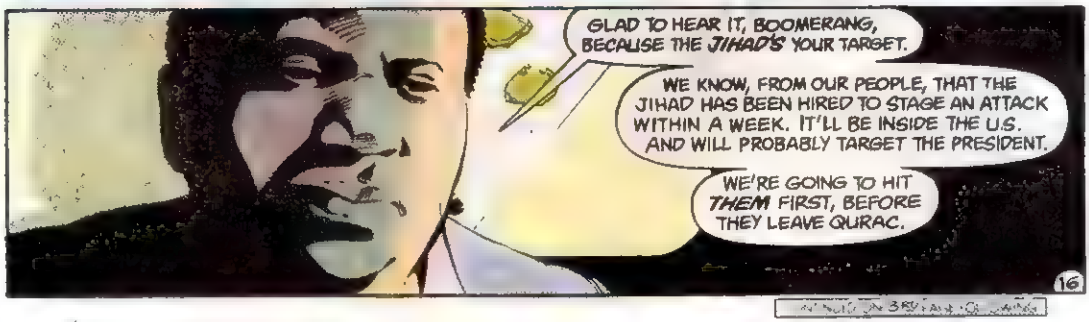

FIRST, YOU'RE GOING TO HAVE TO SURVIVE THE MISSION, GIRL. HERE IT IS.
QURAC'S MILITARY RESOURCES HAVE BEEN RECENTLY CRUSHED BY SUPERMAN*, BUT THEY HAVE AMAZING RESOURCES... SO A FEW DAYS AGO, QURAC DEMONSTRATED ITS NEWEST EXPORT FOR THE TERRORIST MARKET. WHAT YOU ARE ABOUT TO SEE WAS SHOT DURING THAT DEMONSTRATION BY OUR AGENTS IN THE FIELD.
*SEE ADV. OF SUPERMAN #427 & 428.

QURAC UNVEILED THE JIHAD--SUPER-POWERED TERRORISTS FOR HIRE.

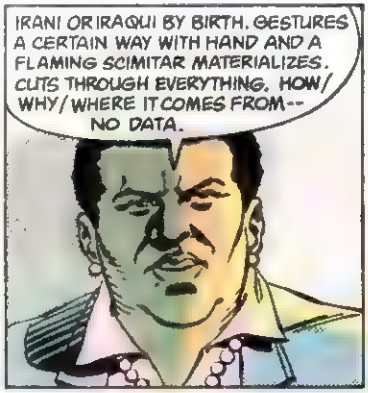

THE SITE WAS MADE UP TO LOOK LIKE AN AMERICAN AIRPORT.

JUST TO MAKE IT REAL IMPRESSIVE, THE JIHAD KILLED REAL PEOPLE.

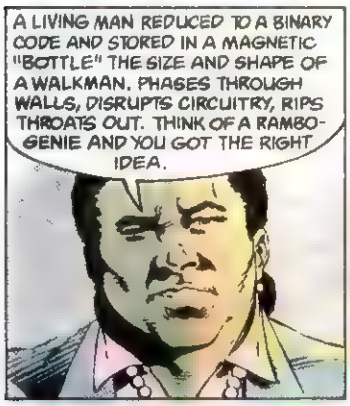

IMPRESSED ME.


GLAD TO HEAR IT, BOOMERANG, BECAUSE THE JIHAD'S YOUR TARGET.
WE KNOW, FROM OUR PEOPLE, THAT THE JIHAD HAS BEEN HIRED TO STAGE AN ATTACK WITHIN A WEEK. IT'LL BE INSIDE THE U.S. AND WILL PROBABLY TARGET THE PRESIDENT.
WE'RE GOING TO HIT THEM FIRST, BEFORE THEY LEAVE QURAC.

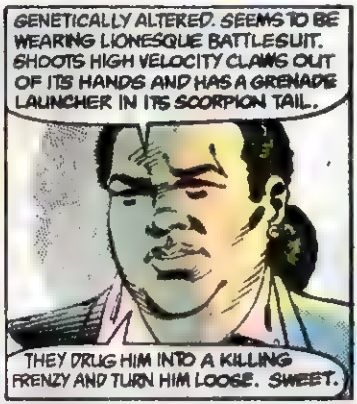
THESE ARE THE MEMBERS OF THE JIHAD AND WHAT WE KNOW ABOUT THEM. LEADER'S CODE NAME IS RUSTAM.


IRANI OR IRAQUI BY BIRTH. GESTURES A CERTAIN WAY WITH HAND AND A FLAMING SCIMITAR MATERIALIZES. CUTS THROUGH EVERYTHING. HOW/ WHY/ WHERE IT COMES FROM-- NO DATA.

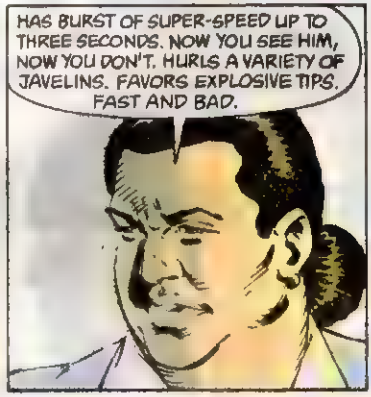
NEXT UP--THE DJINN. WORLD'S FIRST DIGITIZED MAN.

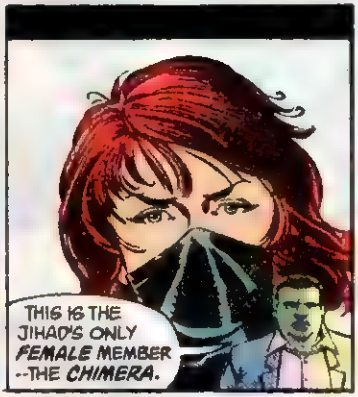

A LIVING MAN REDUCED TO A BINARY CODE AND STORED IN A MAGNETIC "BOTTLE" THE SIZE AND SHAPE OF A WALKMAN. PHASES THROUGH WALLS, DISRUPTS CIRCUITRY, RIPS THROATS OUT. THINK OF A RAMBO-GENIE AND YOU GOT THE RIGHT IDEA.

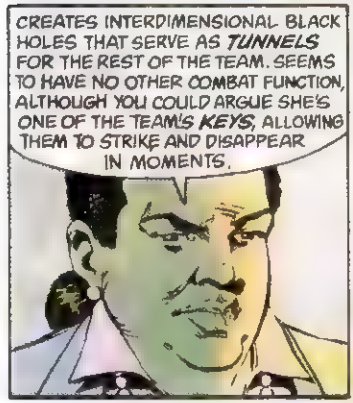
THIS LOVELY'S KNOWN AS MANTICORE.

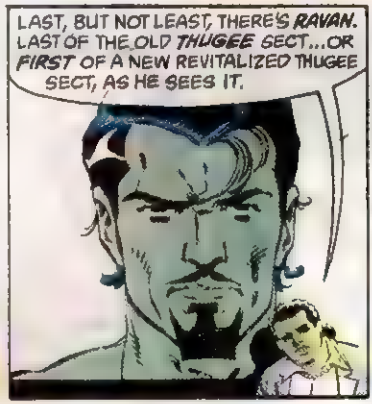

GENETICALLY ALTERED. SEEMS TO BE WEARING LIONESQUE BATTLESUIT. SHOOTS HIGH VELOCITY CLAWS OUT OF ITS HANDS AND HAS A GRENADE LAUNCHER IN ITS SCORPION TAIL.
THEY DRUG HIM INTO A KILLING FRENZY AND TURN HIM LOOSE. SWEET.

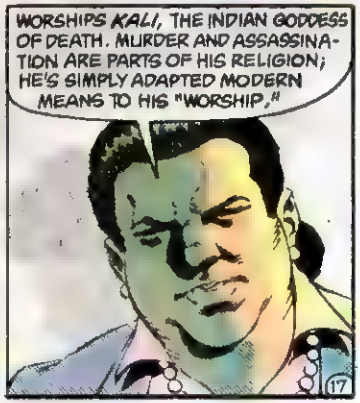
THIS BOY'S DUBBED JACULI.

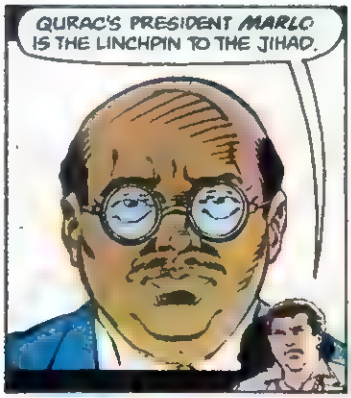

HAS BURST OF SUPER-SPEED UP TO THREE SECONDS. NOW YOU SEE HIM, NOW YOU DON'T. HURLS A VARIETY OF JAVELINS. FAVORS EXPLOSIVE TIPS. FAST AND BAD.


THIS IS THE JIHAD'S ONLY FEMALE MEMBER --THE CHIMERA.


CREATES INTERDIMENSIONAL BLACK HOLES THAT SERVE AS TUNNELS FOR THE REST OF THE TEAM. SEEMS TO HAVE NO OTHER COMBAT FUNCTION, ALTHOUGH YOU COULD ARGUE SHE'S ONE OF THE TEAM'S KEYS, ALLOWING THEM TO STRIKE AND DISAPPEAR IN MOMENTS.


LAST, BUT NOT LEAST, THERE'S RAVAN. LAST OF THE OLD THUGEE SECT...OR FIRST OF A NEW REVITALIZED THUGEE SECT, AS HE SEES IT.


WORSHIPS KALI, THE INDIAN GODDESS OF DEATH. MURDER AND ASSASSINATION ARE PARTS OF HIS RELIGION; HE'S SIMPLY ADAPTED MODERN MEANS TO HIS "WORSHIP."

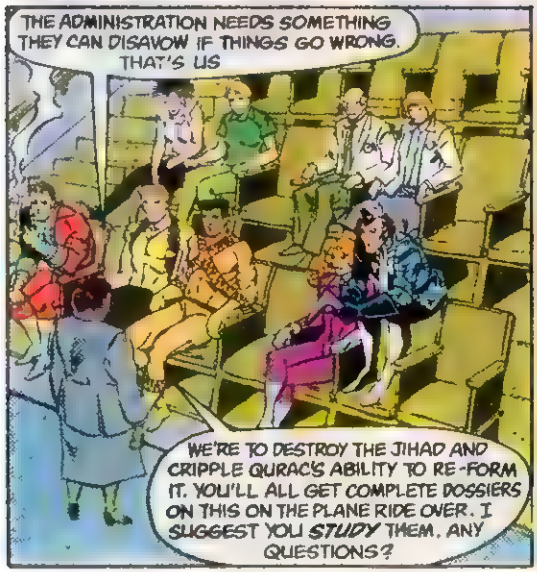


THIS IS THEIR HEAD-QUARTERS IN THE MOUNTAINOUS SOUTHERN PART OF QURAC. ORIGINALLY BUILT BY THE GERMANS DURING WORLD WAR II, IT'S CALLED JOTUNHEIM—LAND OF THE GIANTS. THEY CLAIMED ONLY A RACE OF GIANTS COULD HAVE BUILT IT.

THE TERRAIN PRECLUDES FIGHTER ATTACK AND THE ONLY WAY IN ON THE GROUND IS THAT DOORWAY IN THE BOTTOM TIER. AND THAT ONLY WHEN THE BRIDGE IS HYDRAULICALLY RAISED TO CONNECT WITH THE ROAD OPPOSITE.

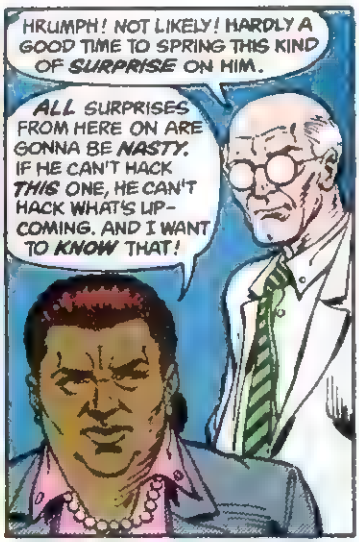
A TACTICAL NUCLEAR STRIKE WAS CONSIDERED AND DISCARDED BECAUSE IT WASN'T CONSIDERED A SURE ENOUGH BET TO WIPE OUT THE JIHAD.

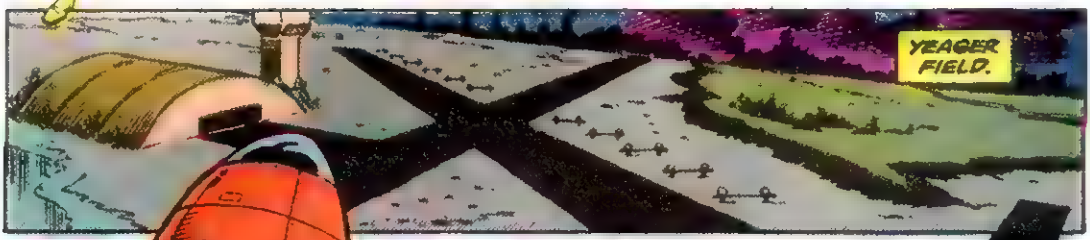
THE ADMINISTRATION HAS ALSO DETERMINED THAT A DIRECT ATTACK BY U.S. FORCES WOULD NOT BE POLITICALLY ADVANTAGEOUS AT THIS TIME.

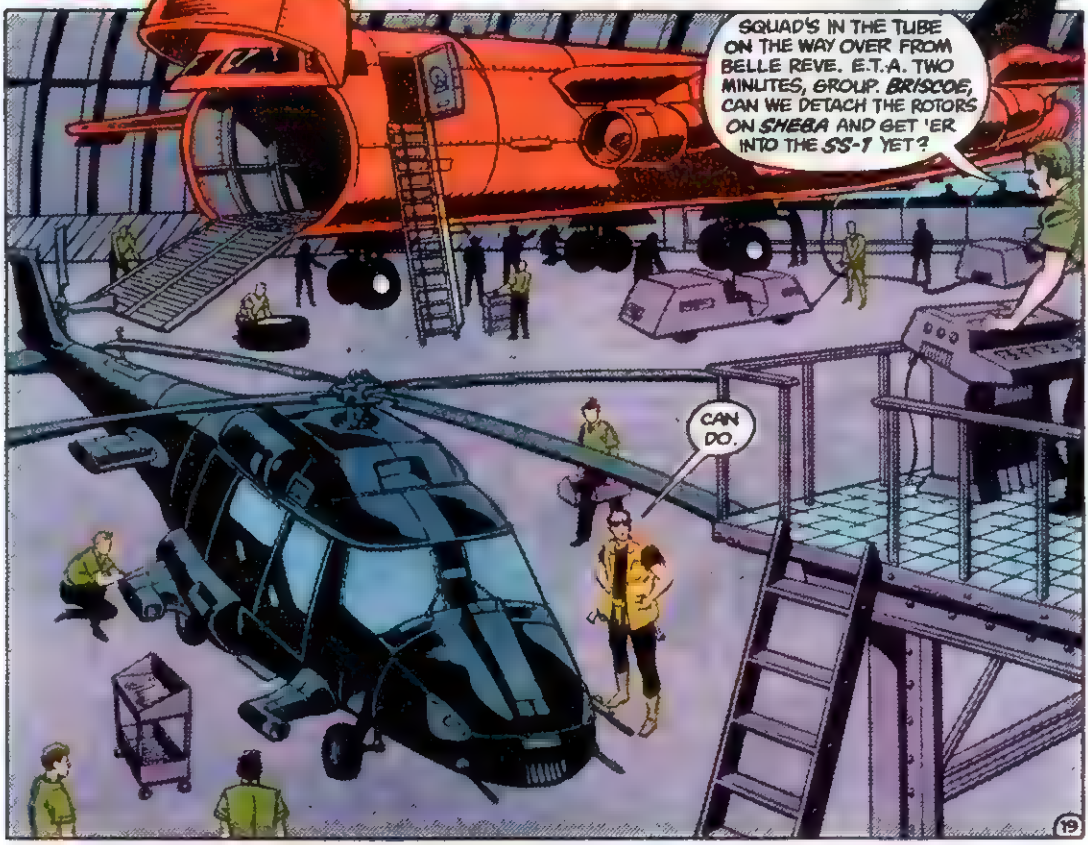


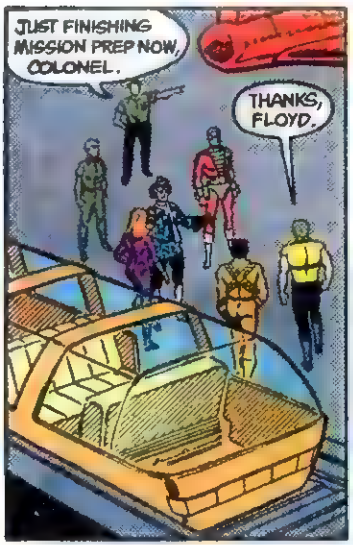
SUICIDE SQUAD IS ONLY TOO RIGHT! BUT STAY CLOSE TO THE BOOMER, DARLIN', AND WE'LL CRACK IT COZY TO-GETHER. WHAT SAY?
GET AWAY

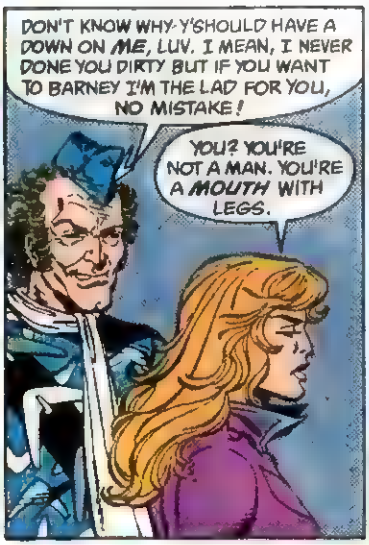
DID YOU TELL FLAG ABOUT THE NEWEST MEMBER TO JOIN THE GROUND CREW?
IT MUST HAVE SLIPPED MY MIND.


HRUMPH! NOT LIKELY! HARDLY A GOOD TIME TO SPRING THIS KIND OF SURPRISE ON HIM.
ALL SURPRISES FROM HERE ON ARE GONNA BE NASTY. IF HE CAN'T HACK THIS ONE, HE CAN'T HACK WHAT'S UP-COMING. AND I WANT TO KNOW THAT!


YEAGER FIELD.

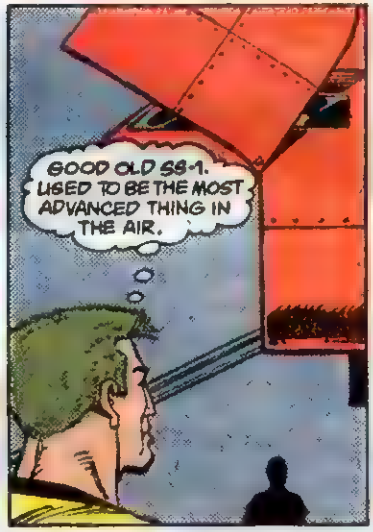

SQUAD'S IN THE TUBE ON THE WAY OVER FROM BELLE REVE. E.T.A. TWO MINUTES, GROUP. BRISCOE, CAN WE DETACH THE ROTORS ON SHEBA AND GET 'ER INTO THE SS-1 YET?
CAN DO.

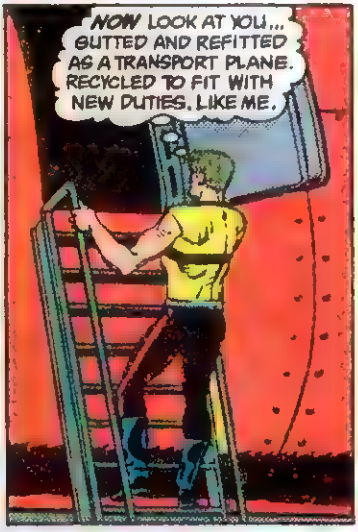

JUST FINISHING MISSION PREP NOW, COLONEL.
THANKS, FLOYD.


DON'T KNOW WHY Y'SHOULD HAVE A DOWN ON ME, LUV. I MEAN, I NEVER DONE YOU DIRTY BUT IF YOU WANT TO BARNEY I'M THE LAD FOR YOU, NO MISTAKE!
YOU? YOU'RE NOT A MAN. YOU'RE A MOUTH WITH LEGS.

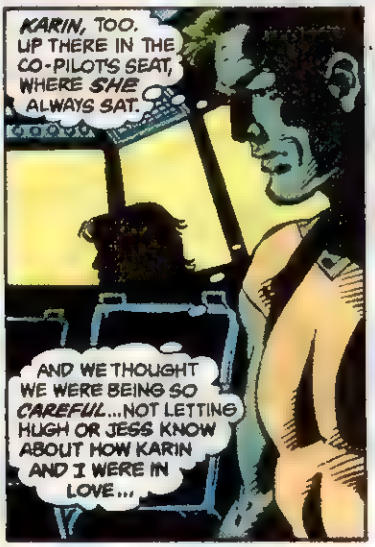
HOW'S IT GOING, BRISCOE?
NO SWEAT.

SHEBA CONSTRUCTION TOP-NOTCH FROM FERRIS AIRCRAFT. NO GLITCH. SYSTEMS SMOOTH. BOLT 'ER DOWN AND WE GO.
FINE. I'LL CHECK OUT THE SS-1 IN THE MEANTIME.


GOOD OLD SS-1. USED TO BE THE MOST ADVANCED THING IN THE AIR.


NOW LOOK AT YOU... GUTTED AND REFITTED AS A TRANSPORT PLANE. RECYCLED TO FIT WITH NEW DUTIES. LIKE ME.

JESS BRIGHT AND HUGH EVANS USED TO SIT HERE BEFORE... BEFORE THAT FINAL MISSION IN CAMBODIA.* I CAN ALMOST SEE THEM SITTING HERE NOW.
*AS SHOWN IN SECRET ORIGINS #14.


KARIN, TOO. UP THERE IN THE CO-PILOT'S SEAT, WHERE SHE ALWAYS SAT.
AND WE THOUGHT WE WERE BEING SO CAREFUL... NOT LETTING HUGH OR JESS KNOW ABOUT HOW KARIN AND I WERE IN LOVE...

WAIT A MINUTE! THAT REALLY IS...
KARIN!
AFTERNOON, COLONEL.

WHAT ARE YOU *DOING* HERE? WHY WASN'T I *TOLD*? *LORD!* I...I AM SO GLAD TO *SEE* YOU...!

I *WOULD* HAVE BEEN, COLONEL. BACK IN THE HOSPITAL WHEN I WAS TRYING TO GET OVER MY NERVOUS BREAKDOWN.

I WOULD HAVE *LOVED* TO SEE YOU.

LOOK, I'M *SORRY* BUT THE DOCTORS TOLD ME I SHOULDN'T.

AT FIRST. WHEN I STARTED MY THERAPY, THAT MAY HAVE BEEN TRUE. NOT LATER. YOU DIDN'T EVEN KNOW I WAS *OUT* OF THE HOSPITAL...

...UNTIL JUST NOW.

THEY ASKED ME TO TAKE CHARGE OF EMERGENCY AND COMBAT MEDICAL OPERATIONS FOR THE SQUAD. I SAID YES TO PAY WHAT I OWE TO JESS AND HUGH.

I TRUST THAT WHAT YOU AND I ONCE HAD WILL NOT INTERFERE WITH OUR BEING ABLE TO WORK TOGETHER PROFESSIONALLY.

NO PROBLEM.

COLONEL FLAG, I THINK YOU BETTER COME OUT HERE. WE'VE GOT A SITUATION DEVELOPING.

HEARD YOU WERE *TOUGH*, DUCHESS! O MY YES! FIRST TIME UP AGAINST *FIRESTORM* HE STRIPS YOU *BUTT NAKED!* AM I RIGHT?

STOP IT!

SECOND TIME OUT AND YOU BLOW *Y'SELF* UN-CONSCIOUS! I MEAN, IT IS TO *LAFF!* THEN YOU GET PUNCHED OUT BY CAPTAIN ATOM!* GONNER COME ON THIS MISSION AND *SOIL* Y'SELF, MOST LIKE!

ENOUGH'S ENOUGH.

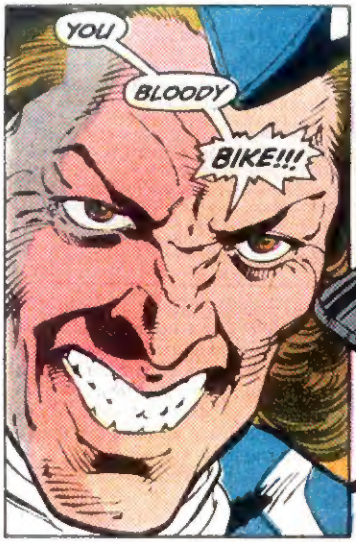
*SEE CAPTAIN ATOM #2--BOB

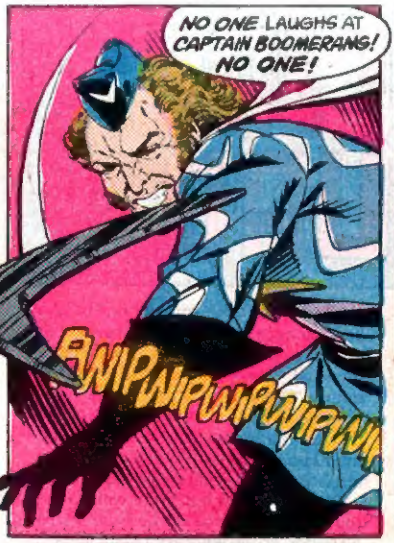
LET'S SEE WHAT MAKES *YOU* JUMP, BOOMERBUTT!

LOSER! CLOWN!

HA HA HA HA HA HA HA

SO HOW'S IT FEEL TO BE ON TH' *RECEIVING* END, BOOMER?

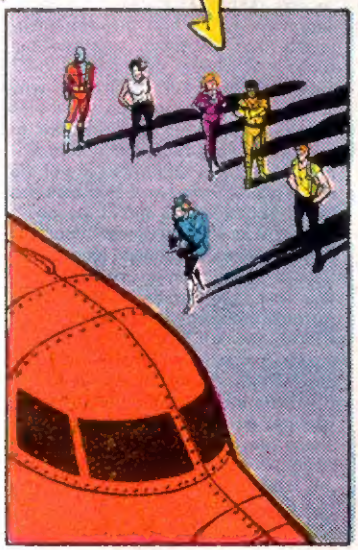

YOU
BLOODY
BIKE!!!


NO ONE LAUGHS AT CAPTAIN BOOMERANG! NO ONE!
PWIP WIP WIP WIP WIP

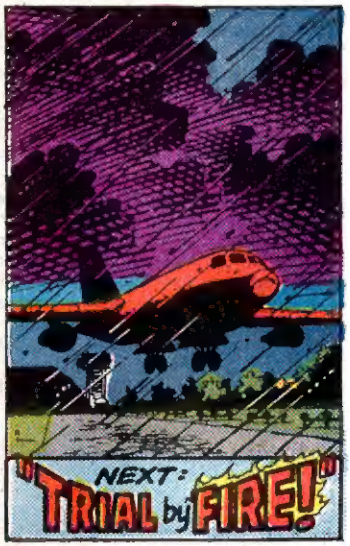
SCHWEK

COOL IT.
YOU BLACK--!

BOOMERANG YOU THROW THOSE THINGS AT WHO I TELL YOU, WHEN I TELL YOU.
YOU THROW ONE AT A TEAM MEMBER AGAIN AND I WILL LITERALLY BLOW YOUR ARM OFF.



LOOKS LIKE WE'RE OFF TO A FLYING START.
COULD BE WORSE. PROBABLY WILL BE. LET'S GET GOING.


NEXT: "TRIAL by FIRE!"

SUICIDE SQUAD

L-2683

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Had things gone differently in the summer of 1985, I would be here telling you all about the genesis of the Challengers of the Unknown revival. Instead, we're here celebrating the revival of the Suicide Squad, a series that never had its own title.

What follows is a slice of comic book life, an example of how things get started around here, and the perseverance of one writer trying to sell a series to DC Comics.

John Ostrander had made a bit of a name for himself over at First Comics; best known for creating *Grimjack*, but also known for being a pretty clever guy. One of John's attributes is that he is an accomplished writer who came to comics after other media. He's also a sweetheart of a man and pretty fun to hang around with.

He and I had met briefly in 1984 at the famed ChicagoCon. Our paths didn't cross again until we bumped into each other at the Atlanta Airport a summer later. The Atlanta Fantasy Fair had some problems and no one was there to meet us, so we found a cab and shuttled over to the hotel. During this time, John revealed that he had been trying to land some assignments at DC in order to diversify. He had an idea for a two-part Green Arrow story that he pitched to editor Len Wein at that summer's ChicagoCon. Len apparently misplaced the first draft of the story so John wanted to know about how to get a copy to the office that wouldn't get lost. (By then, the legend of the black hole called Len's desk had become internationally famous.) In the course of our conversation, we decided we liked each other and would one day like to work together.

The next day we discovered that the Fantasy Fair staff had placed the First Comics table right next to the DC Comics table. First's reps included John, *Grimjack* co-creator Tim Truman, and a cameo appearance by editor Rick Oliver. DC was repped by me. During the lulls in conversations with fans, John, Tim, and I chatted it up flirted with the rep from Universal Pictures, and stole away for a quiet dinner away from the con Saturday night. John wanted to write a series for DC and he thought he had the perfect way to make the Challengers of the Unknown work in 1985. Swell, I thought; Mark Evanier had pitched the same revival to me just weeks earlier. Okay, I tell John, go ahead and write it up.

Shortly after the con, John sent Len another copy of the Green Arrow script and me a copy of his Challengers proposal. Never did read the GA script but the Challengers proposal was filled with ideas. Good ideas too, I explained to Dick Giordano, Executive Editor and the man I burdened with ultimately choosing which Challengers series to go with.

Dick liked both but there was something about Mark's that he liked a wee bit better, so we went with Mark's—sort of. We got derailed along the way and never got past the secret origin of the team, printed at long last in SECRET ORIGINS #12. But Dick encouraged me to pursue a professional relationship with John that might prove beneficial to the company.

John and I then spent quite some time on the phone. In giving him the bad news, I mentioned that if he's looking to do revivals, I always liked the name Suicide Squad and thought something might be done with it. John, always quick on the uptake, started rattling off ideas, some new and some borrowed from his Challs proposal.

Over the late summer and fall, John and I spoke frequently about what the team would be like. We decided to focus on Rick Flag as a solitary man, a leader who knew that each mission could be his last. I don't remember which of us thought about using villains, but I knew I wanted to play in the entire DC Universe. Working on CRISIS, WHO'S WHO, and the DC CHALLENGE will do that to an editor. John readily accepted the notion and started poring through WHO'S WHOs and mentioned concepts.

By December 1985, a few strange things happened. One, a mini-series called Crisis Of The Soul suddenly metamorphosized into LEGENDS. How that happened is recounted in LEGENDS #1-2, but the key facts are that Mike Gold was hired as an editor and was tossed the mini-series as his first assignment. John—remember he's quick on the uptake—suggested a few themes and ideas and suddenly he was the mini-series' plotter. Stranger yet, he found a way to launch the Suicide Squad revival from LEGENDS.

So, John had sold the company on the Suicide Squad but there was no official proposal on the table. Someone at DC noticed that, so the heat was on John, right after Christmas 1985, to get a proposal in to the company.

The proposal arrived sometime in early 1986. John not only discussed who he wanted to use as a core group, but what made each character tick and how they functioned as a team. He even went through themes and storylines that would carry us into the book's second and third year.

During our many conversations, I told John that Rick Flag should have some edge on the team he is leading. To that end, I suggested Rick operate a state-of-the-art helicopter, ala *Blue Thunder* or *Airwolf*. Now I admit that I am a big fan of *Airwolf* so this was a bit of wish fulfillment, but John agreed that Rick needed something. John went out and did a lot of homework on helicopters and came up with lots of goodies. I arranged with Andy Helfer and Steve Englehart for Ferris Aircraft to build the craft (or did you miss the setup back in GREEN LANTERN CORPS #205?).

And then there was the Ground Crew. This was a new element of the series to me, its editor, and I read with fascination about this entire new level to the series. We've had lots of super-teams and most of them have one person they can turn to—Dale Gunn at the old JLA's bunker, Dr. Jace at Outsiders HQ—but here was a team that needed some 30-odd people to run the operation.

I called John and told him we had a hit on our hands. It read well and everyone else who read the proposal said it was better than they possibly expected. The higher-ups, President-Publisher Jenette Kahn, Executive Vice-President Paul Levitz and the aforementioned Dick Giordano, approved the series and it went on the May 1987 publishing schedule, which is why you're reading this in February. It was Paul who came up with the idea to sustain the Squad's momentum by setting the SECRET ORIGINS story of the entire team exactly two weeks between the end of LEGENDS and this issue.

John immediately fleshed out his original ideas, such as linking the Suicide Squad from our old series *The War That Time Forgot* with the original run of *Suicide Squad* in six issues of THE BRAVE AND THE BOLD. I came up with the idea of the Squad's role in the 1950s and Mike Gold suggested we use J.E.B. Stuart from G.I. COMBAT as the international leader. Things began to take shape, but that was all from a typewriter. The time had come to start thinking about art.

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When Dick read the proposal, he said only one name came to mind: Luke McDonnell. Fine by me, since his name also came to my mind. I had enjoyed Luke's work on *Iron Man* at Marvel and was enjoying his work on the soon-to-be-doomed JLA. Luke took the proposal home to read and said he liked it and was interested. I then got him a raise from Dick and promised him a lucrative contract. So we had a penciller. It went pretty easy.

An inker was tougher. I knew the look I wanted and was eager to get something slick and stylized to complement Luke's individualistic pencils. I had asked Rick Magyar to consider leaving VIGILANTE for SUICIDE SQUAD, but he was lured away from VIG for THE QUESTION by Mike Gold, who happened to edit both series. And then came the phone call.

Karl Kesel had been inking LEGENDS and found himself really enjoying the sequences involving the Squad. He had heard our plans for the series and thought they sounded good to him. Originally, Karl was going to segue from LEGENDS to SUPERMAN and save his time for special projects. Then he thought better of it and offered to ink SUICIDE SQUAD. You don't turn down such generous offers.

Our team was set but the time had come to talk. Luke and Karl came to the office one May day and we all went upstairs to the famed Top of the Sixes restaurant. Over a fine meal, the two artists talked shop and we then talked about the entire series. They each had a lot of ideas that complemented one another. However, both had one serious reservation: neither liked the Bronze Tiger all that much. I offered to suggest that John tone down the character's use until we get a feel for the team. They smiled and ordered dessert.

Since May of last year, Luke and Karl have been busy with this series. Karl thought Captain Boomerang needed something to hold his many boomerangs, and with some help from Stephen DeStefano, they came up with the strap now seen. Luke decided to make the Tiger more palatable by redesigning the costume. Karl added a touch and it was accepted by all. Luke and John selected a helicopter and Luke modified it a bit and we now have *Sheba*. Luke and Karl submitted over a dozen logo designs for the series and art director Rich Bruning selected one by Karl. Todd Klein executed the finished logo and then asked in on the series as letterer. During this time, Carl Gafford asked to color the series and suddenly I had a creative team in place. And everyone *asked* to be here. This does not happen often so I remain amazed.

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John and Luke and Karl speak by phone several times a week. They pitch ideas back and forth. Luke tells me he wants to do some more with Vixen so we set things in place for her; Karl wants to use Lashina from the Female Furies and John accommodates him; John has an idea involving Shade the Changing Man and plans are being made for his return. I sit back and take it all in, occasionally redirecting enthusiasm into productivity.

As the team began work on the second issue, both Luke and Karl admitted something. They actually liked what we were doing with Bronze Tiger. Each had come 180 degrees around in their assessment so John is proceeding with our original plans. This book is definitely taking on a life of its own.

Luke has taken on designing our covers, which has been a positive step, and he comes in every few weeks with pages and ideas and comments. Karl and John talk frequently about whatever comes to mind and everyone can't wait to see the finished product.

Like I said, I just sit back here and orchestrate matters and I couldn't be happier. The team works wonderfully together and I think it shows in these pages. But now it's your turn to tell us if that's true. This is, after all, your letters page. I'm just keeping the space warm until you're able to submit comments. We have sent advance copies to a selected handful of writers, plus we're going to run your mail on the SECRET ORIGINS tale here. So please, write and tell us how you feel we're doing. This is a book where ideas matter and opinions count. Every good letters page needs a name so ... here comes the traditional contest. Get us your name ideas by May 1, 1987 and the winner will get a year's subscription.

Until next month, when I detail the backgrounds of our creators, look at the cover for #2 and remember, keep smiling!

—Bob Greenberger